

Stranger Things 4 by thebreeze105.5

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Summary: One summer changed everything. Jim Hopper is presumed dead, and the Byers, along with Eleven, moved out of Hawkins. However, the Party will soon find themselves forced together again just as quickly as they were forced apart when the Mind Flayer returns with a vengeance, intending to set into motion a plan so sinister, it's going to take everything they've got just to survive.

1. Chapter 1

CHAPTER ONE: THE AMERICAN

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA

Two Russian guards walked alongside one another, in what looked to be the corridor of a prison. They stopped at one cell, but one guard quickly said to his counterpart in their native Russian, "No, not the American." His counterpart nodded and moved on to the next cell, where they opened the door to a individual with a raggedy appearance, who desperately pleaded in Russian for the guards to spare him, proclaiming his innocence. The two guards ignored him, as they both grabbed the man and dragged him out of his cell through the corridor, down a stairwell, to a caged in area in what was seemingly the basement of the facility.

They mercilessly tossed the prisoner into the cage, locking it behind him, all while the man was pleading with them to let him go. They then began to turn a lever, which lifted a wooden door above a slot in the wall in the caged area, revealing a demogorgon. All the unfortunate prisoner could do was scream in terror and pain as his body was torn apart limb from limb and feasted upon by the monster, while the two guards mercilessly looked on.

"And you are sure we were to spare the American?" one guard sneered toward his counterpart. "I told you, the orders came from Comrade General himself," the other replies. "He says he is of great importance to the former American Comrade." "That man does not know what he is doing," The first guard spit back. "His little capitalist experiment failed, and we were nearly compromised had the traitor not been disposed of!"

"Gentlemen," an unknown voice rang out from above. Both guards turn to look behind them, fear in their eyes as they realize who waits at the top of the steps for them. The individual began walking down the stairs to meet them. "That is no way to speak of your superior, yes?"

"N-no, comrade," both guards stammered. "I thought not." The man had made it to the bottom of the stairs, where he faced both guards face to face.

He was wearing a white shirt with a black tie, which was draped over by a white labcoat. The man had a scarred face, with a long scar reaching from the tip of his left eyebrow all the way to the right corner of his mouth. He wore an black eyepatch over the other eye, and had a mop of silver hair which sat perfectly groomed above his head.

"Now, we don't you two get this creature locked back up and back to your posts, before I serve you to it as dessert?" The guards immediately nodded their heads. "Yes, Comrade Brenner," they both barked out as they set about their task.

Dr. Brenner then took a step back, smiling, as he was reminded of the power he holds.

HAWKINS, INDIANA

DECEMBER 18, 1985

Mike, Lucas, Dustin, and Max were all seated on the couch of the Wheeler basement, Lucas and Dustin playing the game *Gauntlet* on Mike's Atari, as Mike and Max watched.

"Are you seriously gonna let Dustin beat you at this, Lucas? It looks so easy." Max commented. "Hey, Gauntlet is harder than it looks, okay? Plus, I think Dustin's just cheating." "You wish!" Dustin yelled. "I'm not even trying right now." This led to continued banter and bickering, and while Max laughed at their expense, Mike couldn't help but let his eyes wander to the pillow fort that he still kept up as a memorial of sorts for Eleven, his girlfriend.

He looked down to the ground as he remembered the last time they had seen each other, Thanksgiving, and thought of how much he missed her. He and Nancy had made the trek up to visit the Byers when Hawkins had let school out for Thanksgiving break. But, it was only three days, five counting the weekend, and had gone by way too

fast. Mike smiled as he thought of how Eleven had baked him a cake, all on her own, and he had gifted her a promise ring.

His thoughts were stirred when his older sister Nancy poked her head from the stairs and called out to him. "Mike? Mom said it's time for your friends to leave. Dinner's ready and it's a school night." She reminded her little brother. "Okay," Mike replied. "I'll see you guys tomorrow at school." He said nonchalantly to his friends.

"Hey, Mike," Max said as she placed a hand on his shoulder. "You okay?" "Yeah," Mike lied, looking down. "Hey," Max continued as she knelt down to speak to him face to face. "Christmas break starts this weekend, and El and Will will be here Monday. Don't worry, okay? They're gonna be here." Mike faked a smile and nodded. "Sure, Max. Thanks." She smiled back and stood up, clasping Lucas' hand as they ran up the stairs.

Dustin pulled his backpack back over his shoulders and was heading up to follow them before turning around to speak to Mike. "Hey, Mike. You still meeting me at Cerebro to talk to Will and El on Friday night?" Mike nodded. "I'll be there." "Alright," Dustin replied. "Don't come until around six, because I wanted to talk to Suzie first. Oh, and bring food!" He yelled back as he ran up the stairs to catch up with Max and Lucas. Mike just rolled his eyes and sighed from his position on the couch.

"Mike?" Nancy asked, still standing on the stairs. "Are you okay?" "Yeah," Mike nodded. "It's just...hard. I miss her." "Hey, I understand," Nancy said as she walked up and placed a hand on his shoulder. "I miss them too. We just have to make it to Monday, okay?" Mike smiled up at her and nodded. "Yeah. Monday." "Come on, let's go," Nancy said. "Dinner's probably getting cold." Mike got up to follow her up the stairs, but not before taking one last look at the fort behind him. He let out a long sigh before bounding up the steps.

SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

Joyce Byers' Ford Pinto came to a stop in the front yard of a small, one story house. The house had a gravel driveway, and appeared very small from the exterior, with only two windows surrounding the front

door. Joyce gathered her things and got out of her car, fishing her keys out of her purse and unlocking the door, stepping in to her new home.

None of the kids were home aside from Eleven, Will and Jonathan were already at school at the local high school. Joyce would be homeschooling Eleven this year since she was still a little behind most children her age, however they started later in the day due to Joyce working the graveyard shift at her new place of employment, a general store a couple miles into town.

"Joy-Joyce?" Eleven called out to her as she stood in her bedroom's doorway, frightening her. "Sorry," Eleven said. "Didn't mean to scare you." "That's fine, sweetie," Joyce said as she breathed a sigh of relief. Everything she had experienced over the last couple years left her constantly on edge. "Did you need something?" Eleven shook her head. "Phone message. For you." She then turned away and walked back into her room, shutting the door behind her. Joyce furrowed her brow in confusion.

Who would be calling her this time of day? Unless it was her store manager wanting her to come back for some reason, but he wouldn't be in for another hour. She walked over to the answering machine that was placed on a table next to the couch and pressed play. A familiar voice flooded the house. "Joyce, we really need to talk," Murray Bauman's voice said. "I need you to meet me ASAP, but if you can't meet me, I suppose I can come to you. Just please, get back to me because the news I have is urgent. It's about...well, like I said, we need to meet in person. Call me. Soon." The machine beeped to indicate that was the end of the message.

Joyce sighed as she put her hand over her face, silently crying into it. Why couldn't Murray just let it go? Just accept the fact that Jim was dead and was never coming back? She glanced at the photo she kept of Jim Hopper framed on the table next to the answering machine, and silently set it down, not being able to bear looking at it.

Of course, Murray hadn't indicated that what he wanted to talk about was the possibility of Hopper being alive. But Joyce had a feeling deep down that was what it was. She didn't know what to do. She knew that Hopper deserved to have them explore every last

possibility of his survival, but there was no way he could've survived that. Was there? No, Joyce told herself. Hop is gone. But still, she found herself looking at the answering machine, mulling her options. She knew she never gave up on Will, so she couldn't give up on Hopper now either. She picked up her phone and started dialing.

"Glad you finally reached out to me, Joyce," Murray said as he sat on the bed in his hotel room in Hawkins. "I would've told you I was in Hawkins, but it was urgent that I get here as quickly as possible. You need to."

"I just, just don't see what information you could have that would change anything. Hop's gone, Murray." Joyce said. "My source doesn't seem to think so, Joyce." Murray replied. "Source? What do you mean?" Joyce asked as a look of concern crossed her face. "Look, all I'm going to say is that I need you to get here. Now." Murray replied. "We were going to leave to visit Hawkins on Monday, but I suppose if this is so important..." Joyce trailed off. "Good," Murray replied sharply. "Meet me at the Hawkins Motel Friday night, 8:00, no one else but yourself. Room 144." "Oh...okay?" Joyce replied, but the line had already been dropped by Murray.

She sighed and put the phone down on the receiver. "Everything...okay?" Eleven asked, again appearing in the doorway of her bedroom. Joyce nodded. "We're...going back to Hawkins earlier than expected." "Really?" Eleven's face lit up at the news. Joyce nodded. "We're leaving Friday morning."

Dr. Sam Owens sighed to himself as he walked to his office, squeezing a purple stress ball in his hand. He had been expecting that his superiors would want him back in Hawkins after what had happened over the summer, and to be fair, he did blame himself a little for what had happened. He didn't want to go as far to Philadelphia after the gate was closed, but the chief had done a lot for him and he wanted to give him and his new daughter the space they needed so that she could live a normal life.

But, now that the government had caught wind of just what was exactly going on in Hawkins, it was determined that a government

presence was needed there now more than ever and Owens found himself right back there as the head of its operation. He had tried to stop them from reopening the Lab, but had been powerless to stop it, even after all the bad press.

His superiors told him that the needs of the country would come first. As he arrived, he sat down at his desk and reflected on the night he found the gate in the mall. How the hell had the Russians been able to infiltrate Hawkins, much less open a gate there? How'd they even know about the Upside Down? As he buried his face in his hands, he just silently prayed that he would be able to prevent a nuclear war.

But the craziest thing to him, was that Murray Bauman, *Murray Bauman* of all people, the same man who had made it his mission to shut down the lab in the first place, was asking for his help. Because he believed the chief wasn't dead. How that was possible, Owens didn't know.

What worried Owens even more was the fact that Mrs. Byers had told him that the chief's daughter, Eleven, she was known as, had lost her powers. If she had lost her powers, what possible defense against the Soviets did he have?

As he looked up, he thought he saw a black figure moving outside the window. He quickly got up from his seat to investigate, but by the time he got there, whatever it had been was no longer there.

"Hey, dingus!" Steve was startled from his nap in the back room of the Family Video by his co worker and friend, Robin. "I am sick to death of all these little kids asking me if we have the new Star Trek. It's your turn!"

"Oh my god, Robin, just tell them we don't have it," Steve groaned. "Better listen to her, Harrington," their manager, Keith said as he appeared in the doorway behind Robin, munching on a bag of cheetos. "I'm not paying you to sit in here your entire shift."

Steve groaned as he kicked his legs off the table and walked out to the front register. He was, however, surprised to find none other than Erica Sinclair waiting for him at the front.

"What are you doing here, Erica?" he asked. "Lucas asked me to come pick up some romantic movie for him and his girlfriend because he's too embarrassed to be seen in public buying one," the little girl replied matter-of-factly. "Oh, and where's my free movie, nerd?" "Hey, hey, shhh," Steve hushed her. "My manager's in the back." "Well, you and Robin did promise me free movies for life to make up for me not getting free ice cream," Erica reminded him with her hands on her hips.

"Now's not a good time, Erica." "Pfft, whatever, nerd," she replied curtly, tossing cash onto the counter as she walked out with her movie. "Yeah, nice seeing you too." Steve called out after her. "Harrington!" Keith called out from the back. "Get those new releases up!" Steve rolled his eyes as he moved away from the counter.

Eleven laid down in her bedroom. Jonathan and Will weren't home from school yet, and Joyce was asleep in her bedroom. El didn't really like South Bend, but she didn't think she'd like anywhere as long as Mike wasn't there. It had been nearly three months since she'd had to say goodbye to him, and the pain only got stronger every day.

That is, until Joyce had told her that they were making a surprise early return to Hawkins. For what, El had no idea, but she hoped it was good news for once. Seems like she'd gotten nothing but bad news ever since the day Hopper had died. *No, he isn't dead*, she thought to herself. *I won't believe it*. She knew how silly that sounded, and that she'd probably be chastised by Joyce if she brought that opinion up.

But she couldn't help but feel as if he was alive, it was as she felt him somehow, and yet she didn't. She sighed. If she had her powers, she could go into the void right now and easily find him and learn for herself. But her powers still hadn't come back.

But today, she decided she was going to try. She silently made her way to the living room, turning the TV on to a channel with no signal for white noise and grabbing a handkerchief to blindfold herself.

She sat down, crosslegged, tied the handkerchief behind her head,

and closed her eyes. She began focusing on Hopper, only Hopper, desperately trying to enter the void to find him, it seemed like she was almost there...

She opened her eyes to nothing. She threw off the handkerchief to discover that she was still in the living room floor. She tossed the handkerchief to the floor and slowly, silently started crying, wanting desperately to find out what really happened to her father, and frustrated that, for the first time in her life, there was nothing she could do about it.

Suddenly, the door opened and she quickly sat up in fear, only to find that Will and Jonathan had returned home from school. Jonathan, noticing El had been crying, immediately ran to her and knelt down to examine her.

"El? Are you okay? What's wrong?" "I'm...fine," El replied, using the handkerchief to wipe her tears. "What happened?" Will asked, stepping in. El looked down in shame. "I tried...to find him," she replied.

"Find who?" Will said. "Hopper," she answered after a moment of silence. "I know he's not dead. I can feel him, but I can't get back into the void, I just-" she stammered, as she looked like she was about to break down crying again.

Both Byers brothers moved in to comfort her. "El, I know losing your dad was hard on you, but-" Jonathan began before Eleven abruptly cut him off. "No," she said. "I shouldn't have told you in the first place."

"I believe you," Will quickly said. "Really?" El asked, a glimmer of hope in her eyes. "Yeah, I do. Maybe this means your powers are coming back slowly, or something, but-"

"Will," Jonathan interjected. "Mom said Hopper got vaporized. There's no way anyone could have survived that."

"Yeah, but, what if he got transported to the Upside Down, or something?" Will asked. Jonathan shook his head. "I don't know, Will. It's all just-" he found he couldn't bring himself to finish his sentence

when he noticed El looking at him.

"I just don't know. When we go back to Hawkins, we-" Jonathan found himself once again being cut off by his mother, who was standing in her bedroom doorway.

"Tomorrow," she said. "What?" Jonathan asked, looking up. "We're going back to Hawkins, tomorrow, first thing," Joyce continued. "Murray Bauman thinks he has something. It's not much, but something."

Eleven immediately stood up. "Hopper?" she asked, with a hopeful look on her face. "I hope so, El." Joyce replied. "I really hope so."

"About time you showed up, Mike," Dustin said as Mike climbed up the hill. "Sorry, my dad was making me watch Holly," Mike replied.

"Everything set?" "Yep, I just got done talking to Suzie," Dustin replied. "I was thinking after this, we could go by Family Video and get the new Star Trek with Max and Lucas."

"Sure, that sounds good," Mike answered. "Wanna give El a call?" Dustin asked, wearing a shit eating toothless grin as he held the radio out to his friend. Mike grinned from ear to ear and jumped for the radio, exclaiming, "gimme that!" he quickly changed the radio to El's channel, speaking into the receiver. "El? Are you there? El, it's me, Mike, do you copy?"

No answer. "Maybe they're busy," Dustin said after a few minutes of silence. "Yeah," Mike said glumly, looking down. "Hey, don't worry about it Mike. They'll be here Monday and then you'll have two whole weeks to suck face with her." Dustin said in an attempt to console his friend. Mike let out a half smile. "Yeah. We can go ahead to Family Video, if you want."

"Are you sure you don't want to wait a few minutes and try again?" Dustin asked. "Yeah," Mike replied. "Steve should be holding the movie for us, but he probably can't hold out forever. Let's go," Mike said as he began walking down the hill. "Hold on!" Dustin said, as he began gathering his things. Mike stopped for him at the base of the

hill.

Suddenly, Dustin heard static coming from the radio. "What the-" he said to himself before diving for the receiver. "El? El, is that you?" the transmission was coming through garbled, so that he couldn't make anything out.

"Dustin," Mike yelled out. "You comin'?" Dustin rolled his eyes and sat back up. "Yeah, I'm comin'!" he yelled out as he ran down the hill to rejoin his friend.

Still, he couldn't shake the feeling that the radio transmission he had just heard was one he wasn't supposed to hear...

Joyce walked up to the Hawkins Motel, Room 144, just as Murray had instructed her.

She hadn't followed the instruction to bring only herself, however, mainly because she had just gotten to Hawkins and hadn't yet coordinated a place for her family to stay. The way things were looking, they'd have to be staying here anyway.

She went to knock on the door, only to have it be swung open by Murray. "Joyce, thank you for making it, we've got a lot-" Murray paused as his eyes fell on Eleven, Jonathan, and Will.

"I thought I told you to come alone," he said. "I'm sorry, but we just got here, and we don't have anywhere to stay yet." Joyce replied, frustrated. Murray sighed in exasperation before finally inviting them in.

"Fine, whatever, this is kind of about Eleven too." he said. Eleven stepped up. "What do you mean, it's about me?" she asked questioningly. Murray sighed.

"It's Dr. Owens. He needs to talk to you." "Hi, Mrs. Byers," Dr. Owens said as he walked up from the back of the room. "Eleven, Will. Jonathan. We need to talk about Eleven's powers." Dr. Owens said grimly.

Steve looked up with glee when he noticed the party walking through the doors of the Family Video.

"Henderson!" Dustin started laughing as he ran up to do his secret handshake with Steve. Robin simply rolled her eyes from the counter and spotted Lucas. "Looking for something?" she asked.

"Steve said he was holding the new Star Trek for us," Lucas replied. "Dude! You guys weren't supposed to tell anyone!" Steve hissed. "What's the matter Steve, afraid high school kids won't want to hang out with you anymore?" Robin asked laughingly. Steve scowled. "Yeah, I got it somewhere in here, guys, give me a sec," he said as he fished under the counter for the VHS he had set aside earlier in the day.

After he fished it out, he handed it to Lucas, who quickly said his thanks and ran out with Mike and Max. However, Dustin stayed behind. "What is it, Henderson?" Steve asked, rolling his eyes.

"I think I may have intercepted another communication on Cerebro," Dustin answered. Steve buried his face in his hands. "Oh my god, not this again," he said. "I have had enough to do with Russians for a lifetime!"

"Trust me, I have too," Dustin said. "But what if they're trying to get back into Hawkins?" "For what?" Steve asked in a hushed tone. "The gate closed, the military came in and destroyed the mall. There's no way."

"I hope you're right," Dustin nodded. "Still, be on the lookout, okay?" "I always am," Steve replied, giving his younger cohort a pat on the shoulder. After he had walked out, Robin leaned on the counter next to Steve.

"What was that all about?" she asked quizically. "We might not be out of the woods just yet," Steve replied with a sigh. "What do you think about going by the Cerebro after work?"

"So...you're saying, you think Hopper's alive, but you need Eleven to find him through the void, but she can't, not without her powers,"

Jonathan said as he sat on a bed facing Dr. Owens with Murray, Joyce, Will, and Eleven.

"Yes, and this last part is completely up to Eleven, er-Jane, but we think we can help her get her powers back, but for us to do that, she'll have to come back to the lab." Owens finished.

Eleven immediately flinched at the mention of the place. "No," Joyce said. "There is no way in hell that I-" "Joyce, I understand that you're upset," Owens interrupted. "And I would be too. But there is not a single person left at the lab that was there when Jane initially was. I've cleaned house. We won't be shaving her head, running experiments, locking her up, no BS like that. We strictly want to run some tests to see if her power's capabilities are still there, and if she can get them back."

"I'm sorry. I can't do that to her." Joyce shook her head. "This is what you called me in for, Murray?!" she yelled, screaming at the man.

"We owe this to Jim!" Murray screamed back. "After everything he did for us, you're just going to give up on him like that?! He loved you too much for you to do this to him, Joyce!"

The room fell silent at the mention of Hopper's want of a romantic relationship with Joyce. One she had rejected, until right before his supposed demise.

"No," Eleven said, immediately catching everyone's attention. "I'll do it."

"Sweetie, you don't have-" Joyce began, but instantly shut up as El shot her a determined look. "I will bring him back," she told Joyce. "But I have to see Mike first."

"That's fine," Dr. Owens said. "We can do that."

After times were set and final pleasantries were exchanged, the Byers family stepped outside to book a room for themselves.

As El stepped outside, however, she noticed how the world seemed to flicker around her, until moments later, she was in the Upside Down. She looked around for any signs of her family, but nothing. She

began to hyperventilate, until-

"El?" Will's voice called out to her in the parking lot of the hotel. "You comin'?"

"Y-yeah," Eleven replied, suddenly back in the normal world.

"Everything okay?" He asked as he stepped toward her. "Y-yes," El replied, knowing she shouldn't be lying about something like this, especially to Will.

"Come on," Will said. "Mom said we could use the payphone to call Mike."

Eleven's complexion immediately brightened at this, but she was secretly very scared about what had just transpired, knowing the same had happened to Will not too long ago, and what that had caused. Very, very scared...

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA

Dr. Brenner followed the same two Russian guards as they approached the cell of the American prisoner.

"Bring him to the interrogation room," he instructed them.

"Yes, Comrade Brenner," they both barked as he left them to their business.

The guards opened the cell door to find a battered and bruised, but alive, American man. The man sported a mustache and beard that had grown long and unkempt in his captivity, and the man was dressed in what was a soviet soldier's uniform, but had been reduced to rags in his months of captivity.

They quickly grabbed the man, who did not respond to their commands to get up, and dragged him to the interrogation room, where they threw him in before taking positions on each side of the doorway to stand guard.

"Ah," Dr. Brenner grinned as the American slowly forced himself up

to take a seat at the table across from him.

"Our American prisoner. I have been waiting a very long time for this."

The light shines across from Brenner onto Chief Jim Hopper, malnourished and broken, but alive.

"Brenner," he hoarsely croaked. "I won't tell you anything."

"Why," Dr. Brenner leaned in to him across the table, "You don't even know what I want yet," he said as he flashed a nefarious smile.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2. Chapter 2

JULY 4, 1985

HAWKINS, INDIANA

STARCOURT MALL

Jim Hopper looked up at Joyce Byers. He was standing on the platform next to the key that had opened the gate to the Upside Down. He had just killed Grigori, the Soviet assassin that Mayor Kline had sent to kill them, once and for all, by throwing his body into the key. However, that had created a chain reaction that caused the key to unleash bursts of energy in different directions.

Unfortunately for Hopper, one of these energy bursts was all that separated him from his means of escape back to the control room with Joyce. She had a grip on both of the keys, ready to turn them and close the gate for good. But in doing so, Hopper knew that he would be vaporized, if what Dr. Alexei had told them was true. The way he saw it, he had two options. He could accept his fate and go out a hero, or... the gate. It was still open.

Hopper saw Joyce looking at him, struggling with her decision. To comfort her, he gave a nod and reassuring smile to let her know he had accepted his fate. He saw her close her eyes, and he took off running for the gate. With one great heave, he jumped for it. The last thing he remembered was hearing the key sputter and shatter in all directions before everything went black.

When Hopper came to, he came up coughing and gasping for air. As he looked around, he noticed that everything was dark. He could still see, but he definitely wasn't in Hawkins. He wasn't even in the real world anymore. His plan was successful. He'd managed to jump into the gate to the Upside Down.

He sat up and rubbed his eyes. He was in the Upside Down version of the mall. He stood up but fell to his knees as quickly as he was on his feet. He had to find a way back to his world. But how? Jumping into the gate had taken everything he had and more, and it wasn't good

for him to be stuck in this dimension with no energy. He scanned his surroundings for the gate but found nothing. Joyce must have been successful in closing it. God, he hoped she'd made it. He hoped that wasn't the last time he'd ever see her. Deciding he didn't have time to stick around knowing that the Mind Flayer was likely loose back in the Upside Down, Hopper got on his belly and began to crawl.

DECEMBER 19, 1985

HAWKINS INDIANA

WHEELER RESIDENCE

"Mike!" "Come downstairs!" Mike's mother Karen shouted from the bottom of the stairs.

"Coming!" Mike shouted back, as he groaned and rolled over in his bed. He'd stayed up late watching Star Trek with the party, but they had all gone home after, leaving Mike by himself for the weekend.

Nancy came by and knocked on his door. "Hey, Mike, I think you'll really want to get down here as soon as you can," she said with her head peeked in through the door. "What do you mean?" Mike asked, with an eyebrow raised in question. "Just get dressed already," Nancy said as she went downstairs. Mike rolled his eyes and quickly dressed himself before walking down.

When he stopped on the landing, however, he had to do a double take when he saw who was waiting for him at the foyer. "El?" Mike asked in joy and wonder as he stepped towards her, almost not believing that she was there.

"Hi, Mike," El smiled at him before she ran to him and wrapped him in a hug. "I missed you," Mike cried as he buried his head in Eleven's shoulder. "I missed you too," Eleven replied. "I thought you guys weren't coming until Monday, not that I mind, though," Mike added as he looked down at his girlfriend and brushed a strand of hair out of her face. "That's the thing, Mike," Will said, stepping into the foyer.

Mike looked up. "What?" "It's my dad," El said. "He's alive." "You

might want to call a code red," Will added. Mike nodded. "I'll grab my Supercomm."

KAMCHATKA, RUSSIA

Dr. Brenner sat across from Chief Jim Hopper in the interrogation room. "Now, why don't you try to cooperate this time, yes?" Brenner asked him. He had subjected Hopper to a brutal beating from soviet guards after he initially told him he wouldn't say anything.

"I don't even know what you want." Hopper replied sharply, looking away. Brenner slightly smiled to himself. He was going to be able to break this man, he knew it. "Well, why don't I make it easy on you," Brenner replied, "What do you know already?" Hopper turned to look at him and gave him a glare. "I've told you what I know. About you. About the lab. About what you do to little kids and their parents. You're fucked up."

Brenner flashed a nefarious smile. "Have you ever considered, that what I was doing, was for the good of the country?" Hopper chuckled and rolled his eyes. "Yeah, like how I fought in Vietnam for the 'good of the country'?" Brenner leaned back and stroked his chin. This policeman was tougher to crack than he gave him credit for.

Hopper shifted himself onto the table so that he was looking at Brenner in the eyes. "How'd you survive?" "There's always a contingency plan," Brenner grinned at him. Hopper leaned back in question. "The hell's that supposed to mean? The Rooskies were in Hawkins all along, and pulled you out before you could die?"

Brenner simply shook his head. "You just wouldn't understand." "Try me," Hopper said confidently.

Brenner grinned. "You think you are so smart. But really, you are dumber than I've given you credit for." Brenner paused before pressing on. "Where is the girl?" Hopper's eyes went wide before he remembered he needed to play it cool. He had hoped Brenner hadn't noticed, but he knew it was too late. "What girl?" He asked simply. "You know what girl I am talking about!" Brenner said as he stood and slammed his fist on the table. "Eleven!" "I don't know who you're

talking about," Hopper said back with venom in his voice.

"Very well," Brenner replied. "Guards?" Hopper internally rolled his eyes as two guards immediately appeared to administer him another beating. Whatever, he thought to himself. He'd made it through another interrogation. He'd die before he'd tell that sick fuck where his little girl was. Not that he really knew, but deep down he knew she was safe.

He just hoped she wouldn't come looking for him. He would never forgive himself if Brenner took her back because he led her to him. He had to stay strong, and just focus on getting by to the end of his time here, even if the only way out was through death. He lost Sara. He wouldn't lose another one.

"Can you make anything out?" Steve asked, as Robin sat at the hill next to cerebro with a Russian to English dictionary in her hand.

"No, everything's coming through too garbled," Robin replied, frustrated. "Ah, great," Steve replied. "Do you really think they're back, Robin?"

"We need to assume the worst," Robin answered. "We never even found out why they were here in the first place, so-" "Well, I told you about all the stuff with Eleven and the gate, right?" Steve asked.

"Yeah, but how the hell did the Russians found out about that kind of stuff?" Robin asked. "Good question," Steve said. "Maybe it's like how it was in the sixties, y'know? How Russia was always trying to catch up with us." "The space race," Robin nodded. "Uh, sure, yeah, if that's what it was called." Steve said.

"You are such a dingus," Robin replied as she rolled her eyes. Suddenly, a clear transmission came through. "What is it?" Steve asked as Robin shushed him. "What did he say?" A voice came across the transmission in Russian. "He won't talk," an American voice sneered. "I told you, if we find this..." The transmission became garbled. "Whoa, find what?" Steve asked.

Robin fiddled with the cerebro. "I don't know," she said. Suddenly,

the transmission came back through, clear as day. "You have two weeks to make him talk, or you will be in his position." After that, the transmission died. "What the hell?" Steve asked.

"It almost sounds like, like-" "Like they've got a prisoner," Robin confirmed. "And that one guy sounded American-you don't think-" Steve trailed off, running his hands through his hair. "It's possible," Robin nodded. "Let's call in sick today. Sounds like we need to make a visit to your children."

The party was huddled in Mike's basement, discussing their next step, when Karen came down.

"Mike," she called. "More of your friends are here," "Okay Mom!" Mike screamed back. "So, what were you saying, Will?" He turned his attention back to his friend, who had been attempting to explain the situation, as he held Eleven close to him.

"So Murray Bauman called my mom," "The bald guy?" Dustin asked in question. "Yeah, him," Will added, but before he could continue, Steve Harrington had tumbled down the stairs, Robin in tow behind him. "Ahoy children!" Dustin immediately started laughing. "Steve! Wait. Why aren't you at Family Video?" "Did you really have to interrupt me?" Will asked, annoyed.

"Well, you know how you were telling us about the communication from cerebro?" Steve asked, glancing at Will in apology. "Yeah," Dustin replied. "Wait? You got something?" "Yeah," Robin cut in. "It's the chief. We think he might still be alive," Will's eyes lit up. "Yeah! I was just about to tell them. Murray Bauman thinks he knows where he is."

"Well, it's gotta be somewhere in Russia," Steve said, stroking his chin. "The communication came in in Russian," "But they could be here," Jonathan said. "They built a base under the mall for Christ's sake!"

"No," Eleven said. "If they were that close, I would feel it." "But your powers," Mike said. "I thought they were gone." "Well, that's another thing," Will said. "El-you wanna tell him?" Eleven looked down.

"Mike," she said in a low voice, "don't get mad."

"Get mad at you? How could I ever get mad at you?" Mike said, truly perplexed. "I-I have to go back to the lab." Eleven finished.

Mike's heart dropped as soon as the words left her mouth. Everyone else in the room looked at each other anxiously. "Mike-" Joyce began. "No," Mike said standing up. "No way in HELL am I letting you go back to that hellhole!"

"Mike, the bad men aren't there anymore! It's all Dr. Owens' people!" Will pleaded. Mike whipped his head to look at his best friend. "And you expect me to trust them? After everything that's happened?" "Mike," El pleaded, grabbing her boyfriend's wrist. "They'll help me get my powers back. So I can find Hop."

Mike shook his head as tears formed in his eyes. "You mean like they helped you have a normal childhood? Like how they helped you by taking you away from your mom?"

El flinched as she was reminded of what the lab had done to her mother.

"Mike." Nancy said from her position on the couch next to Jonathan. "You need to trust El on this." Mike couldn't help it, but the tears started flowing freely.

"I-I just can't," he said. "Can't what?" Eleven asked tenderly, as she stood up from the couch to comfort her boyfriend, placing a hand on his cheek. "Lose you again," Mike huffed as he looked away, teary eyed. *Why do we have to do this now? In front of everyone?* Mike thought as he went red. "You *won't* lose me," El replied as she pulled his head down so she could look him in the eyes. "Promise." Mike smiled as they looked at each other and began to draw his lips toward hers.

"Hey, lovebirds!" Steve yelled out from across the room. "You two gonna make googly eyes at each other all day or are you actually gonna help us out here?" Mike smirked as he let go of Eleven. "Okay. Let's get El to the lab."

Alec stood outside the interrogation room with his counterpart as they waited for Dr. Brenner to finish questioning the American. Again. It almost never took this long.

He hated being stationed at the base in Kamchatka. He had wanted to go to Czechoslovakia when he joined the Army to be closer to his family, but the Soviet government never considered their grunts' feelings. No, they were to go where they were needed, even if that meant to a place with little to no population and year round freezing temperatures.

He had no idea why this American doctor had showed up one day, to "help", as his commanding officers claimed. Help with what? The monster? Apparently the base's mission was to open a portal to some other dimension. Alec had heard that there some comrades had even been able to infiltrate the US and built a base there. So much for America being impenetrable.

Alec knew that they had brought a monster from the other dimension back, and were feeding unruly prisoners to it to keep it alive. What Alec didn't understand, though, was why they were keeping this American prisoner alive? He had been there for months and refused to talk. He was of no value, so why not get rid of him? And what interest did the American doctor have in him?

"Comrade." A general's voice rang out, startling Alec who immediately snapped to attention and saluted. The officer returned the salute and stepped closer. "Get the American. Take him to the monster."

TO BE CONTINUED...

A/N: Okay, I definitely did not intend to not update this story for this long. Sorry about that, life happens. I have had time to write, I've just been lazy. Sorry about that. Thanks to those of you who have actually been reading/reviewing/following, though, you guys mean a lot, and I promise I'll try to get this story updated more consistently. I admittedly did have a bit of writer's block, but all the stuff we've been learning about season four has gotten my creative juices flowing. The story will

probably end up taking a different turn than I originally intended, but I think it will be for the best. Please leave a review and let me know what you think!